



ROBERT FULTON BOYD (See Cover)

DR. ROBERT FULTON BOYD, whose cover portrait on this issue of the *Journal* was drawn by our staff artist, MRS. NAIDA WILLETTE PAGE, was one of the founders and the first president of the National Medical Association. Dr. Boyd was a dentist and pharmacist as well as a physician.

He was born July 8, 1858 in Giles County, Pulaski, Tennessee, of slave parents. As a boy he worked on the farm where his parents were located until the age of thirteen. His formal education was gained in the public schools of Pulaski. He left the farm, briefly, to pursue the trade of brick masonry. To continue his education he attended night school for a while and later worked half of the day for his board while attending school the other half. Dr. Boyd's undergraduate education was taken at Old Fisk on Knowles Street, now 12th Avenue North and he received his degree from Central Tennessee College and Fisk University.

In 1876 he began teaching in the public schools and continued this while attending college himself. During this period he was able to open a night school and teach classes for the adults and younger members of the community. While still a student, he became principal of the public school for Negroes in Pulaski, Tennessee, and taught physiology in Central College. Later, he held the position of principal in a school at New Albany, Mississippi, and maintained a leisurely practice. In 1882 he received his medical degree from Meharry Medical College, graduating with honors from the department of Medicine. His accomplishments further included a D.D.S., in 1887 and a P.H.C., (Certificate of Pharmacy), date unconfirmed, from Meharry.

On June 11, 1887 Dr. Boyd entered the practice of dentistry and medicine in Nashville. Double degrees were not uncommon at this time for actually the first class to graduate from the School of Dentistry at Meharry were already medical doctors. In those days the practice of medicine was considered a very doubtful means of livelihood for a colored man. Dr. Boyd was the first Negro to make the venture in Nashville. A minimal professional education did not satisfy Dr. Boyd and he pursued further education with postgraduate work at Ann Arbor, Michigan in surgery, and at Post-Graduate Medical School and Hospital, Chicago, in diseases of women and children. Upon his return to Nashville he became assistant surgeon to Dr. Paul Eve, who was white, of this city, in Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat.

Dr. Boyd's life at Meharry was full and he never married. He held the chairs of many of its departments. Among them were Anatomy, Physiology, Hygiene, Chemical Medicine, Gynecology, and Surgery. For a number of years prior to 1912 he was superintendent and surgeon-chief of the Mercy Hospital. The hospital, hav-

ing burned, he opened in its stead the Boyd Infirmary. As a pioneer in surgery in the state of Tennessee, many of the early Negro surgeons were trained in his hospital, where they were inspired to open hospitals throughout the South.

Dr. Boyd's reputation grew fast outside his native state for in 1897 he was proposed for the office of Surgeon-in-Chief at Freedmen's Hospital, Washington, D. C. He held surgical clinics in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Texas and Tennessee.

His life outside his profession was equally intensive. He served as president of the People's Savings Bank and Trust Company in Nashville, the first Negro Trust Company in the country. In 1892 he was placed on the Republican ticket of the General Assembly of Tennessee but a year later the Negro candidates were disavowed by both the Democratic and Republican Executive Committees and given to understand that their votes were not important. A mass meeting was held to protest this insult and to inaugurate a Citizens' ticket. This done, Dr. Boyd was unanimously placed as the number one candidate for the position of mayor of Nashville. The result is indicated by a quote from the Nashville Citizen "The ticket received the support of the registered colored voters and forever silenced the guns of our would-be disfranchisers."

As a fraternity man Dr. Boyd ranked high in the various societies of which he was a member. He was a public spirited citizen and was always found on the firing line of anything which would help the race and the community in which he lived. At Meharry he was usually president or treasurer of most of the associations at one time or another. An active member of the St. Paul A.M.E. Church in his city, he held an honorary certificate of membership in the Anthropological Society of London, England. He was a member of the Phi Kappa Rho and the Congress of Colored Physicians.

At the time of his sudden death in July 1912 at 54, he was considered one of the leading Negro physicians in the country and reputedly one of the wealthiest.

The facts stated above are sufficient to indicate why Dr. Boyd was a natural choice as the first president of the National Medical Association. DR. MILES V. LYNK affords us enlightening information as to the contributions of Dr. Boyd in the founding of this Association. Dr. Lynk's priority for the suggestion of the formation of a national medical organization in his editorial in his pioneer Negro medical journal, "The Medical and Surgical Observer" in December 1892, has not been challenged. In his recent book Dr. Lynk stated;

Following this up I had several conferences with Dr. R. F. Boyd and others urging them we should form a national organization as soon as possible. Most members of our group, at this time, considered Dr. Boyd the acknowledged leader of the profession. He was always affable, farsighted, a friend of young men and bristling with energy. I was glad to class him as one of my friends.

There was held in Atlanta, Georgia, from September 19 to December 19, 1895, what was known as the "Cotton States and International Exposition." Dr. Lynk was

among those in attendance at this exposition. It was during the course of this Exposition that Booker T. Washington made his famous "Cast Down Your Buckets Where you Are," speech. Lynk states further that;

Dr. R. F. Boyd, who was attending the Exposition, along with others, approached me with the reminder that I had advocated the organization of a national medical association, and said he, "There are several physicians present and representing several states." Now, in his opinion, now was a good time to organize the national body. We both agreed and immediately set about the prosecution and consummation of the objective. First we obtained permission to use the First Congregational Church, which had already become a popular place for the side meeting, etc., for the site for the meeting. Thereupon we set a date. While I do not recall the exact hour, as I recall, it was a Wednesday afternoon, one day in October 1895. After notifying all the physicians we could reach, the next question presented to us was, who should preside?

Now Dr. Boyd was probably the senior of every physician present. I, therefore, suggested to Dr. Boyd that he preside, but he countered with the thought that since the call was entirely impromptu, it might be well to ask Prof. I. Garland Penn, who was commissioner of the Negro division of the Exposition, to preside. There was precedent for this, said he, as Prof. Penn was asked and presided over the group of ladies, who were organizing, just about a week prior. That Prof. Penn ever conceived the idea of such an organization prior to this invitation to preside, was never mentioned at the organization nor otherwise brought to my attention. That is to say I never heard of it until long after the organization—and then in such a way as the modesty of medical men forbade their speaking. I want to emphasize the true fact that no layman organized the N.M.A., in the sense that he conceived the idea or suggested the organization, or that he,

of his own initiative, called the meeting to order. So much for that.

The meeting was held, as scheduled, at First Congregational Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Prof. I. Garland Penn kindly consented to preside, and, acting upon the request, presided. At the meeting there were about twelve (12) physicians representing Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and one or two other states.

The meeting proceeded to organization by asking Prof. I. Garland Penn to preside, as pre-arranged. Prof. Penn, in a few chosen remarks stated the purpose of the meeting, and called for expressions from the persons present. I think each person present, spoke, highly endorsing the movement. That which was lacking in numbers was made up in enthusiasm. It seemed that all sensed the need for a better professional organization, or shall I say organization, for there was no organization on a national level at this time. It was the unanimous opinion, as expressed, that while this was a voluntary meeting, without a formal call, yet we would be in step with the onward march by making the initial step.

Dr. Boyd remained president of the National Medical Association from 1895 until 1898, no meetings having been held in 1896 and 1897.

SOURCES

- KENNEY, J. A. *The Negro in Medicine*. Privately Printed, 1912. pp. 25-26.
 LYNK, M. V. *Sixty Years of Medicine. An Autobiography*, Twentieth Century Press, Memphis, Tenn., 1951. pp. 49-51.
 ROMAN, C. V. *History of Meharry Medical College*. Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Conv., Inc., 1934. 224 pp.

N.B. The Editor is grateful to Mrs. Jacqueline H. Smith, curator of the Health and Medical Care Collection of Meharry Medical College for a photograph of Dr. Boyd and helpful notes used in the preparation of this sketch.



THE WOMEN'S AUXILIARY TO THE MEDICAL, DENTAL AND PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, at Los Angeles, California, has issued a very interesting twenty page pamphlet which is well worth the attention of constituent societies of the NMA. This booklet contains the constitution of the organization, a list of its past presidents, the present officers and executive board, the chairmen of its committees, its five point program and dates for each of its monthly meetings during 1952 and 53. There is also a list of members. The biggest eye opener in the pamphlet is a list of the Auxiliary's contributions to various charities for 1952-53. These total \$1625. These ladies are certainly to be congratulated upon the effectiveness of their organization.

The officers of the Auxiliary are: GERALDINE WOODS, Ph.D., President, EDITH BAILEY, Ph.C., Vice-President, LYDIA MCCAIN, Ph.D., Recording Secretary, MOLLIE JACKSON, R.N., Corresponding Secretary, RUTH ESTWICK, Financial Secretary, LOIS MACBETH CARR, Treasurer, HELEN GARLAND, Parliamentarian, EVELYN GRIFFIN, Chaplain, LADY GEROGE FORDE, Historian, EMILY

BROWN PORTWIG, Ph.C., National Far Western Zone Director.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

SCHERING AWARD COMPETITION FOR 1953

The Schering Award competition for 1953 has begun in the nation's medical schools. Three \$500 prizes will be awarded for the papers judged most distinctive by a panel of leading medical authorities on the subjects covered.

Titles of the three general topics this year are: antihistaminic treatment of upper respiratory allergies and infections; hormone therapy of the degenerative diseases; and new concepts in the treatment of peptic ulcer.

To make possible wider recognition among the increasing number of participants, numerous \$100 Deans' Awards will be presented this year. In each school where several students compete, the Dean is invited to select the most meritorious paper.

The deadline for entry forms specifying the title chosen by the student is July 1. The actual manuscript must be postmarked by October 1. All students duly matriculated in medical schools in the United States and Canada, including those who have participated in previous competitions, are eligible. Manuscripts are limited to 5000 words. Information and instructions for the competition in 1953 are available from Schering Corporation, 2 Broad Street, Bloomfield, New Jersey.